



The Land and Water Management Division of the Department of Environmental Quality placed first in the *2007 Smart Commute Challenge* in the Large Group Category, improving on last year's second place finish with 22 of 76 staff participating. Modes of commuting included bus, bicycle, van pooling and car pooling; some used for the first time by team members. Adding to LWMD staff's motivation was the following testimonial:

Byron Lane, DEQ LWMD team captain for the challenge said, "I would add that participating in this "smart commute challenge" may change how you get to work now and into the future. Let me share a personal experience.

I tried this out last year when this challenge was put forth by commuting from Holt to the office on the CATA bus. I drive 7 miles into Holt and park at the Meijer Parking lot on South Pennsylvania. I bought a 31 day pass for \$30 which allows me unlimited bus riding for 31 days. You can also buy a 10 ride pass (5 days of round trip commuting) for \$8.50 or pay \$1 cash at the door. I tried it for a couple months and found I LOVE IT! I love it may be a fairly strong emotion, but I really do like it. Here is why:

One, I save gas money by not commuting all the way into downtown Lansing and I gave up my parking space in the parking lot saving me the \$34 dollars or so that it cost me to have that parking spot for a month.

Two, I have lowered my stress level by not fighting the traffic trying to get into and out of Lansing. I can't tell you how good it feels riding the bus and reading a book instead of the anxiety and tension caused by inching along in bumper to bumper traffic or in slippery conditions or just fighting the congestion and traffic lights. I have read numerous books over the last year, which prior to that, I could never find time to read.

Three, As an "environmentalist" and a patriot, I feel good knowing that I am saving the environment by producing less pollution and helping the country by doing my small part in reducing our dependency on foreign oil. I repeat, I feel good about this little bit. It just makes sense.

Four, I enjoy watching the people and, believe me, this past year has been a learning experience. As folks in our state deal with the poor economy and trying to survive, I have observed a lot of good, hard working people that are not as fortunate as I am to have a good paying job and that have the option of driving to work.

Many of the people that ride the bus do not have the driving option. They depend upon the bus to get to work at McDonalds, etc. Riding the bus has helped me recognize my blessings and opened my eyes to those that are struggling. Okay, I have given my "rose colored glasses" version of this past year. What are the negatives?

One, It probably adds 10 or 15 minutes to my commute each way. But those 10 or 15 minutes are stress free and additional time to read my book.

Two, Invariably there will arise times which you would like to have a car to drive to something at lunch or immediately after work to an area outside the normal commute. That happens, but the inconvenience of not having your car "at your fingertips" can be minimized by doing those other trips from your commuter parking spot or by driving to the area outside your normal commute that you wanted to go to after work and ride a different bus into work than you normally do. You just have to have an idea of the various routes CATA has.

Three, For those of you that work in the field, getting back to work late could be a problem. Keep in mind that most routes run every $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. Exceptions would be the Mason to Lansing and the Williamston/Webberville to Lansing routes which run once in the morning and once at night. CATA has a program that you can sign up for which covers those emergency situations where you miss your bus and have no way to get to your commuter lot. This program gives you a couple coupons which you can use to find other transportation options to get you home during an emergency. I don't know all the details since I have not had to use it, but it is available.

Bottom line is this. I will never go back to commuting into Lansing in my own vehicle as long as CATA buses are running. This has been a great experience. Those of you that commute alone and have the option of parking at some large parking lot on the outskirts of Lansing and commute in are, in my opinion, fools if you don't at least try it. Happy commuting."

Another participant added:

"..... I started biking to work from East Lansing during the warm months a few years ago, my doctor has been pleased with the drastic improvement in my cholesterol profile (HDL/LDL ratio) and blood sugar levels. Apparently aerobic activity is very helpful with those. And I shed about 10 pound to boot!"

Submitted by Byron Lane, DEQ & Captain of the LWMD team.